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From: editor@mountainwestnews.org
Sent: Mon 9/28/2015 7:24:08 PM
Subject: Mountain West News Daily Newsletter

Gallatin River, Gallatin Canyon

Photo courtesy of
Rick and Susie
Graetz

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Mountain West News is a
program of the
O'Connor Center for the Rocky
Mountain West at
The University of Montana

Monday,
Sept. 28, 2015

Produced by Shellie Nelson, MW News Editor

[Mountain West Voices](#)

Editor's notes:

In the **Rockies today**, a casualty of the ongoing budget battle in Congress may be the 50-year-old Land and Water Conservation Fund.

With the Sept. 30 deadline for a continuing resolution to keep the federal government from shutting down, none of the proposed resolutions contain funding for the program, which uses money from offshore oil and gas leases for a host of public lands and water projects.

Following last week's announcement that the federal government would not list the sage grouse under the federal Endangered Species Act, Idaho decided to challenge the decision, as did a couple of Nevada counties and a mining company.

Tomorrow, Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead and Montana Gov. Steve Bullock, who are the chair and vice-chair of the Western Governors' Association, respectively, will testify before Congress on changing the Endangered Species Act.

Also in the news, handling contaminated water from mines in Colorado and British Columbia, a national park in Utah examines its permitting for canyoneering after seven people died earlier this month in a flash flood, and Boeing Utah celebrated putting its first wholly made in Utah airplane tail on the truck bound for South Carolina.

Montana Public Radio will broadcast Mountain West Voices at 4:54 p.m. today.

This afternoon's broadcast features a visit with acclaimed Montana singer-songwriter John Dendy about his strikingly original work.

Tune into Montana Public Radio at 4:54 p.m. today or listen online via

Barbara Theroux offers a
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Quote of the day:

"The decision by Shell to abandon its Arctic drilling program for now primarily reflects the realities of lower global oil prices. When prices go down the oil industry shortens their list of projects in development by removing the most expensive ones."

Michael C. Lynch, president of Strategic Energy and Economic Research, who advises oil companies and investment banks, on [Royal Dutch Shell's decision to stop drilling for oil in the Chukchi Sea off the coast of Alaska for now](#).
- New York Times

Rockies today

[Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund will likely go unfunded](#)

None of the federal stop-gap budget measures before Congress contain renewed funding for the 50-year-old Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has distributed almost \$17 billion in royalties from federal offshore oil and gas leases to states, making it likely that the program will expire, and reinventing it in the future may be tough.

Missoulain; September 28

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[Challenges to U.S. sage grouse plan filed in Idaho, Nevada](#)

Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter said the administrative rule put in place by the federal government to protect sage grouse and its habitat in lieu of listing the species as endangered are more restrictive than an actual listing and that's why Idaho filed a lawsuit challenging the decision. In Nevada, where Gov. Brian Sandoval supported the decision, a similar lawsuit was filed by two counties and a mining company.

Flathead Beacon (AP); September 28

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[Wyoming, Montana governors to testify before Congress on Endangered Species Act](#)

Gov. Matt Mead, the Wyoming governor who is now chairman of the Western Governors' Association, has made reform of the federal Endangered Species Act the focus of his year in that post, will testify before the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works on Tuesday, as will Montana Gov. Steve Bullock, who is vice-chairman of the WGA, and Dan Ashe, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Daily Journal (AP); September 28

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[Colorado officials question EPA's process to pick contractor for](#)

mine cleanup

Environmental Restoration LLC was the contractor working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Aug. 5 when the Gold King Mine blowout occurred, and the news that ER developed the request for proposal for the construction of a wastewater treatment plan to treat the wastewater that is pouring out of the Colorado mine at the rate of about 550 gallons per minute raised questions with both Colorado U.S. Rep. Cory Gardner, as well as La Plata County Commissioner Gwen Lachelt, a Democrat.

Durango Herald; September 26

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Gibraltar mine seeks permission to increase effluent discharge into B.C. river

After the Mount Polley mine disaster in August of 2014, British Columbia requested all mines that stored water behind earthen dams to reduce the amount of water withheld behind those dams, and Taseko Mines Ltd. has requested the province approve a 50 percent increase in the amount of effluent it is able to discharge from its Gibraltar mine into the Fraser River, a request the Tsilhqot'in Nation is opposing because of the fear the increase will harm fish.

Vancouver Sun; September 28

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Larger, more intense wildfires will continue to drive costs higher

The forecasts for a warmer, drier future in Idaho and other western states, where more precipitation will fall as rain rather than snow, means wildfire conditions will intensify, and while forest managers call for more thinning, logging and use of fire to reduce fuels, winning over the public to put those tools to work on the ground is another matter, and some are concerned that the push to overhaul the way the federal government funds fighting wildfires may have the unintended consequence of more aggressive wildfire fighting efforts, pushing the costs higher and removing fire's natural effects from the landscape.

Idaho Statesman; September 28

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After 7 die in flash flood, Utah national park evaluates permit system

A flash flood on Sept. 14 killed a party of seven who were canyoneering through Zion National Park's Keyhole Canyon, a narrow slot canyon that requires ropes and harnesses, and thus a permit from the Utah national park. The permit was issued at 7:30 a.m., when the weather forecast predicted a slight chance of rain, and thus a "moderate" chance for a flash flood, allowing the party to obtain a permit, but after the worst day in the park's history, the permitting system is under review.

Salt Lake Tribune; September 28

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Oilfield worker deaths increased 27 percent between 2013, 2014

At a recent meeting of a consortium of oil and gas companies on worker safety in Colorado, the news that oilfield worker deaths in the United States climbed from 123 in 2013 to 142 in 2014 surprised attendees, who said companies are working together to promote worker safety.

Denver Post; September 28

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Boeing ships first "made in Utah" airplane tail to South Carolina

There was a party on Friday at Boeing Utah's warehouse near the Salt Lake City International Airport where the first airplane tail to be completely made in the Beehive State was loaded on a specially-designed truck bound for South Carolina. Boeing employs more than 1,000 workers in Utah, with 760 working at three locations in Salt Lake County and another 250 who work at locations in Ogden and Little Mountain.

Salt Lake Tribune; September 26

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Water

AP: Irrigation, aquaculture use lion's share of Idaho's water

The Associated Press's review of U.S. Geological Survey data found that agriculture and aquaculture use most of the water in Idaho, that the state has only one municipal water system and that the state trails others in the United States in federal funds received for water projects.

Idaho Statesman (AP); September 28

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Beyond the region

Shell Oil cites disappointing yields in abandoning Arctic drilling plan

On Monday, Royal Dutch Shell officials announced the company would abandon its decade-long effort to drill for oil on a lease 150 miles off the coast of Alaska in the Chukchi Sea "for the foreseeable future" after getting meager results from its exploratory well that did not offset the extremely high cost of operations.

New York Times; September 28

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As oil production in N.D. declines, man camps shut down

As the number of drilling rigs in North Dakota counties decrease, the need for temporary housing, or man camps, to house oilfield workers has declined as well, including in Mountrail County, where the number of drilling rigs has declined to 68, and where only five of the 23 permitted man camps have applied to renew their permits. In Williston, Mayor Harold Klug plans to ask the City Council to end temporary permits for oilfield workers.

Missoulian (Bismarck Tribune); September 28

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GDP numbers suggest Canada's economy is turning a corner

The signs are subtle, but economists believe that Canada's economic numbers for the third quarter will see gains, stopping the decline saw in the first and second quarters, and putting the nation on a path to sustainable economic growth.

Calgary Herald (Financial Post); September 28

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New species of dinosaur unearthed above the Arctic Circle

A thousand miles north or so from the University of Alaska Fairbanks above the Arctic Circle is a treasure trove of dinosaur bones, including a new kind of the hadrosaur group of duck-billed dinosaurs, named the *Ugrunaaluk kuukpikensis*, which means ancient grazer of the Colville River, in the Inupiaq language of the Inuit natives of Alaska.

New York Times; September 28

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Economy:

Wyoming firm wins \$1.9M Defense award for land-mine detecting robot

Politics:

Idaho U.S. representatives praise House Speaker Boehner

Politics:

High-profile GOP Utahns endorse Sen. Marco Rubio for president

Tribes:

[Dozens file for seats on Confederated Salish, Kootenai tribal council in Montana](#)

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